

Sophocles, Antigone: 441- 506

Creon To Antigone 441

You! You with the head to the ground!

Do you admit your guilt?

Antigone I admit, my guilt. Yes, I did it!

To Antigone:

You again! Tell me with a few, quick words. Were you aware of the proclamation that forbade anyone from burying Polyneices?

Antigone Of course I did. Everyone did.

Creon And you had the audacity to break that law? 449

Antigone Yes, because this was not a law decreed by Zeus, nor by Zeus' daughter, Justice, who rules with the gods of the Underworld. Nor do I believe that your decrees have the power to override those unwritten and immutable laws decreed by the gods.

These are laws which were decreed neither yesterday nor today but from a time when no man saw their birth; they are eternal! How could I be afraid to disobey laws decreed by any man when I know that I'd have to answer to the gods below if I had disobeyed the laws written by the gods, after I died?

I knew that my death was imminent, of course I did and even if it came sooner, I would still think it a good thing because when one lives in such a dreadful misery why should he not think death to be a good thing?

There is no pain in this death but the sight of the body of my mother's son, dead and unburied would be a painful thing for me for me to endure.

Nothing else hurts me and if you think I'm a mindless woman then perhaps it's a mindless man who recognises a mindless woman. 471

Creon To the chorus.

Know this, though: The tougher the mind, the easier it falls. The tougher the iron is made in the burning fire, the easier it breaks or cracks. And it is a light pull of the reins which teaches the most spirited horses obedience because it's not right for a slave to be arrogant.

This woman knew the arrogance of her deed she performed, and was aware of her disobedience to our laws yet she still continued with the performance of that deed and laughed at her achievement.

Were she to gain the upper hand in this and keep it with impunity she would be seen as being the leader of this land and not I!

What, is she a man?

Even though she's my sister's child and even though she's the closest blood relative to me here, of all of us who revere Zeus, she will not escape the ultimate penalty. She will not escape death. Even her sister will be put to death because I accuse her, too, of the same crime because she too had schemed the burial of Polyneices' corpse.

Call her here immediately. I saw her only a minute ago behaving like a raving lunatic.

Soldiers exit through the palace gates.

The soul of those who scheme of evil deeds in the cover of darkness and shadows are often disclosed even before those deeds are accomplished.

And there's nothing I hate more than when someone is caught committing a crime and tries to hide it by embellishing it with sweet words.

Antigone Kill me then! Or are you waiting for something else?

Creon Who, me? No, I need nothing else. I have everything I need. 497

Antigone So what are you waiting for? I find no pleasure in your words either now nor, dare I say, will I, in the future. And the feeling, I am sure is mutual: none of my actions please you. Where can I get higher pleasure than by burying my brother? All these men here would agree with me if only their tongue was not stopped by fear.

Kings, though, among all the other benefits they get with the crown, they can also do and say as they please!

<https://genius.com/Sophocles-antigone-full-text-annotated>

CREON

An enemy

can never be a friend, not even in death.

ANTIGONE

But my nature is to love. I cannot hate.

CREON

Then go down to the dead. If you must love,

love them. No woman's going to govern me— 600

